



# *Town of Lexington*

## **Police Department**

**Subject:** Traffic Direction and Control

**Effective Date:**  
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Annually

**By Order of:** Mark J. Corr, Chief of Police

## **Policy & Procedure**

# 63A

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## **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES**

Traffic direction and control, in broad terms, includes all functions, procedures, apparatus, and markings designed to promote and insure the safe and efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

The requirement for traffic direction and control exists at almost all locations within the traffic network, at varying times and under many different circumstances. At major intersections, the need for traffic direction and control is essentially continuous. At other locations, the need for traffic direction and control is temporary and predictable. Events such as parades or major road construction projects are examples of temporary and predictable traffic interruptions. The most difficult situation arises when traffic direction and control is needed as a result of unanticipated circumstances or events. Traffic accidents, fires, and adverse weather conditions require the Commanding Officer to take impromptu measures to provide adequate traffic direction and control.

Traffic direction and control is an important function of the Lexington Police Department; and many traffic related responsibilities are shared with other agencies. The traffic engineering authorities and officials of various other agencies/organizations must design a safe and efficient traffic network, complete with traffic control devices, signs and markings. Fire and Public Works Departments often provide valuable services when planning for special events or controlling unpredictable traffic or road conditions. School communities share information concerning their students' walking, bus, and vehicular drop-off routes and volume.

This Department will carry out its responsibilities for traffic direction and control in concert with other authorities. The Department will provide appropriate personnel and other resources, in numbers and kinds adequate to deal with reasonable expectations concerning the need for traffic direction and control services.

This Department will maintain its close working relationship with traffic engineering authorities and other officials to plan and implement traffic direction and control services for the community. Because any officer of this Department may be called upon to carry out traffic direction and control functions in response to unanticipated needs, the Department will provide training in the basic skills and knowledge required for those functions.

### PROCEDURES

#### A. Traffic Direction and Control

1. The Captain of Operations shall be responsible for the Lexington Police Department's traffic direction and control functions.
2. In conjunction with traffic engineering authorities and other officials, this Department will:
  - a. Periodically analyze the traffic direction and control needs of the community; and
  - b. Identify and anticipate, to the extent possible, the numbers and kinds of resources required.
3. When allocating resources for traffic direction and control, the Department will make choices in order to optimize our efficiency and effectiveness. Specifically:
  - a. Unmanned traffic control devices, signals and other apparatus will be used wherever they are capable of satisfying the identified service requirement.
  - b. Sworn personnel will be assigned to carry out traffic direction and control functions at those times and places when:
    - i. Unanticipated traffic problems arise;
    - ii. Non-sworn personnel are not readily available; and/or
    - iii. Law enforcement authority is deemed necessary.
    - iv. Contractual agreements make officers eligible for traffic duty assigned as a detail.

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- c. Non-sworn personnel will be assigned to carry out those traffic control functions judged to require human intervention to insure safety and efficiency, but where a need for enforcement authority is not needed.

### B. Annual Surveys

1. The Captain of Operations (or a designee) shall maintain an administrative file on parking and traffic related information, issues, and problems. This file may contain:
  - a. Complaints or suggestions from citizens;
  - b. Reports and information from other government related agencies; and
  - c. Police reports relevant to parking and traffic problems and issues.
  - d. Officer recommendations based upon experiences and knowledge of their patrol area and response to calls.
2. The Captain of Operations should, in cooperation with the Engineering Department, participate in a survey and report relating to traffic direction and control annually. This survey should:
  - a. Examine the specific locations where information gathered in the administrative file indicates a possible problem with the safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
  - b. Assess alternatives to the existing means for traffic direction and control, where applicable;
  - c. Identify special needs and/or deficiencies in the parking control program and suggest alternatives.
  - d. Identify any location requiring school crossing guards by examining the traffic flow and movements along the routes traveled by school-aged children in the area of all public elementary and public middle schools, as well as any private school where an issue has been identified that may need similar attention / assignment. The review should consider:
    - i. Traffic volume and speed;
    - ii. The number of children using a given location;
    - iii. The type and nature of the roadway; and
    - iv. The type and nature of any traffic control devices controlling applicable intersections.
  - e. Recommend changes to the traffic direction and control network and propose amendments to the Town's parking and traffic bylaws, if necessary.

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3. Whenever possible, the Captain of Operations should seek input from all Department personnel concerning Lexington's traffic direction and control needs. **See also Department policy 62D – Traffic Safety Advisory Committee.**
4. If it is found that any changes in the locations or times of any crossing guards is necessary, the appropriate school administrator shall be notified and consulted regarding the proposed change.

### C. Temporary Traffic Control

1. The Chief of Police, or a designee, under the authority of Article II, Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Town of Lexington Traffic Rules and Regulations, may, in an impending or existing emergency to expedite traffic or safeguard pedestrians: direct traffic, temporarily close streets and/or temporarily prohibit parking.
2. When any action is taken under the authority of Article II, every reasonable effort shall be made to notify the general public of the action to be taken.
3. The provisions of Article II are generally used for special events where unusual traffic patterns or parking restrictions must be implemented. It shall be the responsibility of the Commanding Officer or other person designated as the Officer-in-Charge of any special event, to insure that special restrictions on traffic flow or parking are clear to motorists and pedestrians.
  - a. Proper signs shall be posted and appropriate traffic control devices, such as traffic barricades shall be used.
  - b. Sufficient signage and traffic control devices shall be placed at intersections or other key areas so as to minimize confusion to any users of the roadway.
  - c. Portable or part-time stop signs should not be used as temporary traffic control devices, except in an emergency.

### D. Manual Traffic Control

1. Roadways and intersections in the Town of Lexington are engineered so as to provide for efficient and effective movement of traffic under normal conditions without the intervention of police personnel. Should random circumstances occur resulting in traffic problems, officers are encouraged to take control of the impacted intersections and manually direct traffic until normal flow once again occurs.

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2. The Chief of Police, or a designee, may assign personnel to manual traffic direction posts, at specific times and places, after considering the following:
  - a. Traffic volume and speed;
  - b. Number of pedestrians present;
  - c. Duration of congestion; and
  - d. Presence or absence of traffic control devices.
3. Mechanical traffic control devices should not be continuously operated by any person, except under the following conditions or when otherwise ordered by a superior officer:
  - a. Malfunctioning of the signal;
  - b. Facilitating movement at traffic accidents or the scene of other emergencies;
  - c. Providing a thoroughfare for motorcades; and/or
  - d. Alleviating congestion resulting from the use of automatic controls (i.e. during rush hours).

### E. Directing Traffic Manually

1. The major objective of personnel carrying out manual traffic direction and control is to maintain/restore the safe and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
  - a. Sworn and non-sworn personnel will at all times give due consideration to their own safety while carrying out manual traffic direction and control.
  - b. Personnel will employ uniform procedures (signals, gestures, etc.) to enhance driver and pedestrian recognition and response to their direction.
2. To meet the major objectives of traffic direction and control personnel are responsible for:
  - a. Regulating traffic flow;
  - b. Controlling turning movements;
  - c. Coordinating vehicle movements with the flow at adjacent intersections;
  - d. Detouring traffic, as necessary;
  - e. Controlling pedestrian movements;
  - f. Arranging for removal of traffic obstructions;
  - g. Facilitating emergency vehicle movements; and
  - h. Rendering aid and assistance to motorists and pedestrians.

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3. High Visibility Clothing
  - a. The Department will issue to each person given traffic direction and control duties high visibility outer wear.
  - b. Personnel will wear this high visibility outer wear, in addition to the full prescribed uniform, when conducting manual traffic direction and control.
  - c. In emergency situations, personnel may manually direct traffic without high visibility outer wear for short periods of time. In these situations, **extreme caution and sound judgment must be used.**
4. Traffic direction and control--position in roadway.
  - a. Personnel carrying out manual traffic direction and control will insure that their presence and purpose are well demonstrated to motorists and pedestrians by:
    - i. Positioning themselves so that they can clearly be seen by all, usually in the center of an intersection or street;
    - ii. Standing straight with weight equally distributed on both feet;
    - iii. Allowing hands and arms to hang easily at sides, except when gesturing; and
    - iv. Standing facing or with back to stopped traffic, and with the side toward traffic being directed to move.
5. Signals and commands.
  - a. To stop traffic the officer should:
    - i. Extend his arm and index finger toward and look directly at the person to be stopped until that person is aware (or it can be reasonably assumed that he/she is aware) of the officer's gesture;
    - ii. Raise the pointing hand at the wrist so that its palm is toward the person to be stopped, and the palm is held in this position until the person is observed to stop.
    - iii. To stop traffic from both directions on a two-way street, the procedure is then repeated for traffic coming from the other direction while continuing to maintain the raised arm and palm toward the traffic previously stopped.
  - b. To start traffic the officer should:
    - i. Stand shoulder and side toward traffic to be started, extend the arm and index finger toward and look directly at the person to

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- be started until that person is aware (or it can be reasonably assumed that he/she is aware) of the officer's gesture;
- ii. Second, with palm up, the pointing arm is swung from the elbow only, through a vertical semi-gesture until the hand is adjacent to the chin. If necessary this gesture is repeated until traffic begins to move.
  - iii. To start traffic from both directions on a two-way street, the procedure is then repeated for traffic coming from the other direction.
- c. Right turning drivers usually effect their turns without the necessity of being directed by the officer. When directing a right turn becomes necessary, the officer should proceed as follows:
- i. If the driver is approaching from the officer's right side, his/her extended right arm and index finger and gaze are first directed toward the driver, followed by swinging the extended arm and index finger in the direction of the driver's intended turn.
  - ii. If the driver is approaching from the officer's left side, then:
    - (a) The same procedure may be followed utilizing the left arm extended; or
    - (b) The extended left forearm may be raised to a vertical position from the elbow while closing the fingers so that the remaining extended thumb points in the direction of the driver's intended turn.
- d. Left turning drivers should not be directed to effect their movement while the officer is also directing oncoming traffic to proceed.
- i. The officer should either:
    - (a) Direct opposing vehicles to start while avoiding left turn gestures directed at turning drivers, which will lead them to complete their turn only when there is a gap in the oncoming traffic; or
    - (b) Stop and hold oncoming drivers, after which the left turning driver can be directed into his/her turn.
  - ii. When directing a left turn, the officer should:
    - (a) Stand with the right side and arm toward the oncoming traffic, and the left side and arm toward the left turning driver;

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- (b) After stopping the oncoming traffic by using the right arm and hand, the right hand should remain in the halt gesture;
- (c) The extended left arm and index finger and officer's gaze is directed toward the driver who intends to effect a left turn. When the left turning driver's attention has been gained, the extended left arm and index finger are swung to point in the direction the driver intends to go.

### 6. Signaling Aids

- a. The whistle is used to get the attention of motorists and pedestrians. It is used as follows:
  - i. One long blast with a stop signal;
  - ii. Two short blasts with a go signal; and
  - iii. Several short blasts to get the attention of a driver or pedestrian who does not respond to a given signal.
- b. The whistle should be used judiciously.
  - i. It should not be used to indicate frustration, and the volume should be just that sufficient to be heard by those whose attention is required;
  - ii. Whistle blasts directed at pedestrians should be moderate in volume;
  - iii. The whistle should be used only to indicate stop, go, or to gain attention, and when its purpose has been achieved the officer should cease sounding the whistle; and
  - iv. If the whistle is utilized continuously, it ceases to hold meaning for drivers and pedestrians.
- c. The voice is seldom used in directing traffic. Arm gestures and the whistle are usually sufficient. There are numerous reasons why verbal commands are not used.
  - i. Verbal orders are not easy to give or understand and often lead to dangerous misinterpretations.
  - ii. An order that is shouted may also antagonize the motorist.
  - iii. Verbal instruction may be beneficial when the officer needs to impart information to pedestrians. Hand gestures to pedestrians often cause drivers to think these are meant for them and can cause unwanted movement and create an unsafe situation.



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- d. Occasionally a driver or pedestrian will not understand the officer's directions. When this happens the officer should:
  - i. Move reasonably close to the person and politely and briefly explain his directions.
  - ii. No officer shall exhibit a loss of temper by shouting or otherwise indicate antagonism toward those who do not understand or who do not wish to obey the officer's directions.
- e. A flashlight can be used to halt traffic.
  - i. To stop traffic slowly swing the beam of the light across the path of the oncoming traffic. The beam from the flashlight strikes the pavement as an elongated spot of light.
  - ii. After the driver has stopped, arm signals may be given in the usual manner, using the vehicle's headlights for illumination.

### F. Special Traffic Situations

- 1. Special Events. A variety of public events may require special accommodations to be made for parking and traffic regulation. These events may include parades, sporting events, or any other activity that concentrates a high number of people or vehicles into a given area.
  - a. The Captain of Operations, or a designee, shall prepare a traffic direction and control plan for each special event.
  - b. Although the nature and extent of the traffic direction and control will vary depending on the type of event, the officer preparing for these events shall consider the following:
    - i. Ingress and egress of vehicles and pedestrians;
    - ii. Provisions for parking;
    - iii. Spectator control;
    - iv. Public transportation;
    - v. Provisions for relief of officers assigned to fixed points for extended periods of time;
    - vi. Provisions for the news media;
    - vii. Alternate routes for through traffic;
    - viii. Temporary traffic control devices and parking prohibitions;
    - ix. Emergency vehicle access; and
    - x. Signage and notification efforts.
  - c. The principal goals of any traffic direction and control plan will be to:
    - i. Reduce the possibility of road and traffic hazards to motorists and pedestrians;

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- ii. Provide for the smooth and efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic; and
  - iii. Effectively and efficiently deploy the available Department personnel and other resources.
- 2. Roadway Construction.
  - a. Roadway construction and maintenance projects are usually planned in advance. In these instances, a traffic direction and control plan shall be prepared in the same manner as a special event.
  - b. When unexpected construction or maintenance is necessary, the Commanding Officer will ensure that the appropriate traffic direction and control measures are taken.
- 3. Adverse Weather and Road Conditions include, but are not limited to, motor vehicle collision hazards such as debris in the roadway and/or acts of nature such as fog, ice, snow, rain or smoke.
  - a. Unpredictable weather conditions and motor vehicle crashes may require the emergency implementation of traffic direction and control measures. It shall be the responsibility of the Commanding Officer to take appropriate measures to control these situations. In addition:
    - i. It shall be the responsibility of all Department personnel to work cooperatively with the Fire Department, state and local public works, and any other agency that shares the responsibility for coping with adverse road and weather conditions.
    - ii. The Captain of Operations, or a designee, will serve as a liaison with these other departments and agencies and will assist with the development of mutual assistance policies, procedures, and programs.
  - b. The safety of Department personnel and other highway / roadway users is significantly at risk during severe weather and road conditions involving fog, rain, snow, ice, or smoke. Personnel must use extraordinary safety measures, including:
    - i. Wearing as much highly visible clothing and equipment as may be available;
    - ii. Providing motorists with as much notice as possible that an impending hazard or obstruction is ahead. This may be done with the use of flares or other warning and traffic control devices;
    - iii. Other resources such as road signs, emergency lights, and flashing road arrows which may be available upon request from

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the Department of Public Works, the Fire Department or other agency; and

- iv. The officer may use an emergency police vehicle to provide additional lighting or to make use of the emergency lights to warn on-coming traffic.
4. Fire Scenes. The Lexington Police Department's primary role at a fire scene is furnish close cooperation to the Fire Department and to assist in the preservation of life, the protection of property, the prevention of crime, the establishment of fire lines, the control of crowds and the following traffic direction and control duties:
- a. Establish a perimeter and allow no unauthorized vehicles or pedestrians to enter (Note: police vehicles should be located at or outside the perimeter in order to avoid being blocked in by fire fighting apparatus);
  - b. Close streets and/or reroute traffic around the fire scene;
  - c. Control and monitor bystanders and spectators; and
  - d. Provide other assistance consistent with the needs of public safety.
  - e. Investigate any crime involved (covered in other policies).